
Primary Language Sampler Module:

vocabulary building activities and games for the MFL and ISL classroom

Overview:

There are many activities and games to learn vocabulary in any language in a fun way. We have included a selection of activities, most of which will work for both spoken and signed languages and are suitable to use with young beginner-level pupils. Feel free to adapt those that you might find useful to the context in which you will teach the module.

Vocabulary Races

- Divide the class into two or more teams. Ask pupils to line up in front of the board
- Have flashcards, or display a PowerPoint with images on the board
- Call out or sign a word
- Pupil at the front of the line races to the board and touches the matching image
- They then go back to the end of the line and the game continues
- Variation: If there is a native speaker or ISL user in your class you can ask them to call out or sign the words

What's Missing?

- Stick flashcards to the board and ask pupils to try remembering them
- Ask pupils to close their eyes and remove a flashcard
- Ask them to open their eyes and ask: What's missing?
- Pupils call out or sign the missing flashcard
- This can be played in teams or individually, or from a PowerPoint presentation or similar
- To make it more challenging, you can remove two or more flashcards at a time

Invisible Flashcards

- Stick nine flashcards to the board and draw a grid around them
- Use a pen or a pointer to drill the nine words. Always point to the flash card you are drilling
- Gradually remove the flash cards but continue to drill and point to the grid where the flash card was, nod your head to encourage children to say or sign the word of the removed flash card
- Pupils should remember and continue as if the flash cards were still there
- This activity highlights the impact of visual aids. It really proves that the images 'stick' to pupils' minds

Primary Language Sampler Module: **vocabulary building activities and games for the MFL and ISL classroom**

Guess What I Have

- Show a set of flashcards to all the pupils and call out or sign them together with the class
- Give each pupil a card
- Pupils should say to each other: “guess what I have”? and if their peer answers incorrectly, they get to keep the card. If not, they give it to the person who guessed correctly

A Very Long Sentence

- This is simply an adaptation of the popular game “I went to the market and bought...”
- Going around the class, the pupils repeat the base sentence and add one word to it.
- You can also ask them to repeat the last one or two words and add their own, to make it easier

Bingo

- Prepare cards with 6-8 images or numbers 1-12. The cards should have some images in common and some different
- Play Bingo. Pupils mark what is on their card as the teacher signs or calls out the words
- You can also ask pupils to be the bingo masters

Roll the Dice

- Choose six picture cards and place them on the whiteboard with magnets
- Give each card a number 1-6, writing the numbers above the cards with a whiteboard marker.
- Divide the class into two teams
- Give a pupil a dice to roll, large enough to be easily seen. The whole class watches to see what number comes up. The first pupil to sign or say the matching vocabulary card wins a point for their team
- If nobody knows the vocabulary card, re-introduce it and ask pupils to repeat it. They must try to remember so they can answer correctly the next time
- This can also be played just with numbers, by asking each pupil to sign or say the number they roll

Stepping Stones

- This is a way to record the score in games and quizzes
- Draw a simple river on the board with some stones across it. For each point you can cross out one stone
- You can also draw a ladder and for each point the team goes up one rung

Primary Language Sampler Module: **vocabulary building activities and games for the MFL and ISL classroom**

TPR activities

TPR (Total Physical Response) activities are particularly suited for young learners and beginners because they do not require them to produce language but rather respond to teacher's input with movement or body language. The list of TPR activities is very long. We have included some of our favourites for this context here.

Body Writing

- In groups or pairs, pupils make the shapes of letters or numbers with their bodies
- Explain that they can stand up or lie down
- Call out or sign a letter and give them a minute or two to organise themselves
- Go around the groups and give them some words of encouragement
- You can extend this activity by asking to make words

Clap Once, Clap Twice, Raise One Hand, Raise Two Hands

- Say or sign a word, while you show or point to an image
- If what you are saying or signing matches the image, pupils raise one hand (or clap once). If it doesn't, they raise both hands (or clap twice)
- The faster you play the more fun the game is

Stand in Order

- Give each pupil a flashcard and tell the class that they must organise themselves in a particular order related to their card. It could be in alphabetical order or from smallest to largest item etc.
- For ISL learners, give each pupil a card with a sign letter (without the written form) and get them to line up in alphabetical order
- You can also give each pupil a flashcard and then read off or sign off the order that you would like pupils to get into
- You can decide how quickly or slowly you say or sign the order, making it easier for beginners

Primary Language Sampler Module: **vocabulary building activities and games for the MFL and ISL classroom**

Circle and PE hall games

These are games that typically involve movement and challenges or collaboration among pupils. They can be played in the classroom, in the PE hall or school yard. Circle games facilitate teacher observation but also allow all pupils to see each other. They generally allow pupils to feel at ease because everyone is on equal terms in the circle, and nobody feels more on the spot than others or left behind. The following are some suggestions which might work well in this context.

Fruit Salad

- Make a circle of chairs with one chair less than the number of pupils in your class
- Divide your pupils into groups of numbers, colours, food or drink words or any vocabulary you would like to practice, and ask one volunteer to stand in the middle
- The person in the middle then calls out or signs one of the words, and all of the children assigned that word must get up and find a new chair
- If the person in the middle calls out "fruit salad," everyone must get up and find a new chair
- The objective is for the child in the middle to steal one of the other children's spots while they're trying to find a new chair. When this happens, the person without a chair is the new pupil in the middle

Slam

- Ask pupils to sit in a circle and place some flashcards in the middle of the circle.
- Ask pupils to put their hands on their heads
- Teacher signs or says the word for the image on one of the flashcards, and the pupils race to touch it
- The pupil who touches it first gets to keep the flashcard

Hand Writing

- Play in pairs: Each child in turn draws a number on their partner's hand using a finger
- Their partner must have their eyes closed while trying to guess what the number is

Walking Snap

- Prepare a set of cards, half with images and half with the matching words
- Give each pupil a card. Without showing their cards, pupils must find the classmate with the matching one

Primary Language Sampler Module: **vocabulary building activities and games for the MFL and ISL classroom**

Activities and games based on music

Songs and music can provide a positive backdrop to some fun language activities. Catchy tunes and well-known songs across various languages, for example, can be used effectively for transferral of language skills and vocabulary learning. Songs offer authentic contexts for the development of listening and speaking skills and the modelling of native pronunciation. Music also adds to the memorability of the vocabulary in the lyrics. These are some of the activities that could suit young beginner pupils.

- A well-known tune can be used by pupils to practice the vocabulary recently learnt. The vocabulary can be included in the lyrics. Movement can also be added, for example by assigning words to each pupil and asking them to stand up or sit down when they hear their word
- Pupils can be encouraged to create their original rap or song using vocabulary learnt as the lyrics (such as numbers, days of the week, letters of the alphabet) and by working in pairs or groups. They can rehearse before performing for everyone else
- Some songs associating lyrics with actions, which in some cases are famous across different languages, can be used with pupils for fun activities. Varying the speed of the song, omitting verses, and other variations could offer further ways to keep pupils engaged
- Songs containing rhymes, alliterations or animal sounds are great opportunities to talk about different conventions and word endings in various languages
- Videos, where the images describe a very simple story as narrated by the lyrics, can be a great way to reinforce listening comprehension skills, especially if the song is already known by the pupils in other languages

Technology based games

These websites and digital tools offer many games that can be played online

Educandy

Educandy Tutorial

Quizlet

Quizlet Tutorial

Wordwall

Wordwall Tutorial